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ABSTRACT

Although 41 percent of all marriages are remarriages for one or both partners, little is known about the impact of this change in marital status on various aspects of family life. To assess the linkage between the remarriage household and the labor force, the legal system, visitation with non-custodial parents and grandparents. relations between new couples and ex-spouses, and relations with the extended family, questionnaire data were gathered from adult and adolescent family members in 87 white stepfather households in which the mother's natural children resided. Results showed that men's participation in the labor force increased after remarriage, while women's decreased. Custody and visitation were renegotiated at the time of remarriage, with actual visitation consistently less than the amount legally agreed upon both before and after remarriage. Men and women both reported more friendly than hostile relationships with ex-sposues after remarriage, and that relationships with parents had improved. (A series of tables presenting the survey data is appended.) (JAC)

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The Impact of Remarriage on Labor Force Participation, Divorce Decree Modification, Visitation Ex-Spousal Relationship, and Extended Family Reorganization

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Although 41% of all marriages are remarriages for one or both of the partners, little is known about the impact of this change in marital status on various aspects of family life and on the lives of the individual family members both inside and outside the home. This study assessed the linkage between the remarriage household and the labor force, the legal system, visitation with non-custodial parents and grandparents, relations between the new couples and ex-spouses, and relations with extended family.

Questionnaire data was gathered from adult and adolescent family members in 87 white, upper-middle-class stepfather households in which the mothers' natural adolescent children resided. The questionnaires were personally administered and each family member completed his independently. One-third of the families had additional children that were born into the remarriage. The median age of the husbands was 38; all had post high school education, the majority having attended graduate or professional school. The median age of the wives was 39; all except two women had post high school education, nearly half having attended graduate or professional school.

Labor Force Participation

Results suggest that men's participation in the labor force increases after remarriage, while women's decreases. Although the ratio of career-oriented versus non-career-oriented jobs was not influenced by remarriage for men, women reported being in more career-oriented jobs after remarriage than before. However, both before and after remarriage, many more men than women were in career-oriented jobs. This is consistent with women reporting more occupational change around the time of remarriage than men report. Of those who do report change in occupation, four times as many men and twice as many women enjoy an increase in occupational status as experience a decrease. Focus on the signs of career advancement reveal that men show a higher increase in hours of job-related work than women, a higher increase in pay, and a higher increase in number of subordinates. While both men and women are bringing more work home after remarriage than before, there is more change for women; many women are bringing more work home and many others are bringing less work home. With respect to school attendance, remarriage is associated with less school matriculation for men and women, but the decrease is sharper for men. More women than men reported school attendence before and after remarriage.

In summary, remarriage appears to be associated with more change in labor force participation for women than for men. Men's careers appear to be less influenced by remarriage, with the possible exception of post-remarriage schooling. This decrease in school attendence may reflect the couple's decision to plan the remarriage around the completion of his school program. Overall, men appear to be working harder after remarriage; this increase in work may be a typical career pattern for men of this age cohort or it may be a response to the

acquisition of additional financial responsibility coupled with less household responsibilies. Among the women, there are signs of "career catch-up" that probably began after divorce. Although women are reporting some movement toward more career-oriented jobs, the typical discrepancy between men's and women's career advancement is evident. Remarriage appears to enlarge this discrepancy., and to be more disruptive of women's careers than men's.

Divorce Decree Modification

About 10% of the men and women in this sample went back to court around the time of remarriage, half by their own and half by their ex-spouses' initiation. Change in financial agreements was the most commonly reported reason for invoking the legal system. Custody and visitation were often renegotiated around the time of remarriage, resultin in less legally agreed upon visitation and less actual visitation between minor children and their non-custodial natural fathers after remarriage of a custodial mother or non-custodial father. In addition, actual visitation was consistently less than the amount of visitation stated in legal agreements both before and after remarriage.

An effort to identify factors associated with the amount of actual visitation since the remarriage between the adolescents in the study and their natural fathers revealed that neither mother's unresolved emotions about her ex-spouse, nor the adolescent's unresolved emotions about the first family, nor the percentage of child support payments received, nor the distance to the natural father's home, nor the cohesion of the stepfamily were associated with actual visitation. However, the adolescent's sex and age were related to actual visitation; being male and being younger means more time with non-custodial fathers.

Related to the issue of visitation between between parents and children who live in different households is the individual's concept of "immediate family". Almost a third of the adolescents included their natural fathers in their definition of immediate family. Likewise, half of the stepfathers who had children from previous marriages included them. This is evidence that we need to expand our traditional concept of immediate family to include family members living in other households.

Ex-Spousal Relationships

Remarriage appears to have a variable effect on relations with ex-spouses. About half of the men and women reported a change in these relations after remarriage. Within the group reporting change, twice as many women enjoyed improvements as experienced deterioration; the men experienced an equal number of worsening and improving relationships. When asked about the quality of relations with ex-spouses at the time of the study, the women and men both reported about six times as many relationships were friendly or business-like as were hostile. In addition, assessment of the relationships between the natural

fathers and the stepfathers showed that twice as many of these relationships were positive as were negative.

Extended Family Reorganization

With respect to extended family, remarriage had a positive effect on the relationships between adults and their parents in the present sample. Forty-four percent of the men and 35% of the women reported an improvement; 8% of the men and 5% of the women reported a change for the worse. From the adolescents' perspective, they appeared to have gained more grandparents than they lost, but there was a slight shift toward the stepfathers' extended families and away from the natural fathers' families. Although two-thirds of the adolescents reported no change in amount of visitation with natural paternal grandparents, more adolescents experienced a decrease than ani increase within the third reporting change. In addition, about two-thirds of the adolescents thought of their stepfathers' parents as grandparents.

Summary

Remarriage appears to have some impact on linkages between members of the new stepfamily and the world outside the household, at least for an upper-middle-class white population. For custodial mothers, it may mean a decrease in labor force participation while maintaining a career path, an improvement in relations with an ex-husband, and an improvement in relations with one's own parents. For stepfathers, it may mean continued career advancement and additional financial responsibility, less time with one's own natural children from a previous marriage, a change in relations with an ex-wife, and an improvement in relations with one's own parents. For adolescents, the remarriage of one's custodial mother may mean seeing less of one's natural father and "inheriting" new extended family, including visiting stepsiblings. For children of a non-custodial father, his remarriage may mean less contact with him. From society's perspective remarriage of custodial mothers within this population appears to have the following impact: an increase in standard of living for custodial mothers and their children, an increase in the discrepancy in career advancement between husbands and wives, further erosion in primary relationships between children and non-custodial fathers, reorganization of extended families, and an additional stress on the courts.

PERCENT OF MEN AND WOMEN REPORTING
SCHOOL MATRICULATION
BEFORE AND AFTER REMARRIAGE

	MEN		WOMEN	
	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER
PART-TM	19	11	30	22
FULL-TM	24	5	19	11
TOTALS	43	16	49	33

PERCENT OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORK FOR MONEY BEFORE AND AFTER REMARRIAGE

	MEN		WOMEN	
	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER
NO WORK	7	3	15	12
VOL ONLY	1	0	3	5
PART-TM	12	9	15	30
FULL-TM	79	85	63	52
>FULL-TM	1	2	3	2

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PERCENT OF MEN AND WOMEN REPORTING CAREER PATH JOBS

	MEN		WOMEN	
	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER
JOB PART OF CAREER PATH	86	87	66	73
JOB FOR MONEY	14	13	34	27

PERCENT OF WOMEN AND MEN REPORTING CHANGE IN OCCUPATION AROUND TIME OF REMARRIAGE

	MEN	WOMEN
STEP UP IN STATUS	19	28
NO CHANGE IN OCCUPA	77	58
STEP DOWN IN STATUS	5	14

PERCENT OF WOMEN AND MEN REPORTING
CHANGE IN JOB DESCRIPTION
AT TIME OF REMARRIAGE

	MEN	WOMEN
YES	28	47
# OF HOURS		
MORE	57	37
SAME	22	36
LESS	22	37
# OF SUBORD.		
MORE	70	50
SAME	22	14
LESS	9	36
INCOME		
MORE	76	65
SAME	20	12
LESS	4	24
AMT WORK TAKEN HOME		
MORE	38	50
SAME	48	20
LESS	14	30

NUMBER OF REASONS GIVEN FOR INITIATING USE OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM

BY REMARRYING PERSONS

	HUS[a] (NON-CUS)	WIV[b] (CUS)
$	1	4
CUSTODY	3	0
VISITATION	3	2
----------	-	-
ANY REASON	3	4

BY EX-SPOUSES OF REMARRYING PERSON

	EX-WIV (CUS)	EX-HUS (NON-CUS)
$	2	5
CUSTODY	1	4
VISITATION	1	3
----------	-	-
ANY REASON	2	5

[a] N=57 PREVIOUSLY MARRIED:
N=41 WITH CHLDRN FROM PREV.

[b] N=87.

MEDIAN NUMBER OF DAYS PER YEAR OF VISITATION FOR THE ADOLESCENTS WHO ARE IN CONTACT WITH NATURAL FATHERS

	BEFORE REM	SINCE REM
OLDER OR ONLY ADOLESCENTS (N = 87)		
LEGAL AGREEMENT	76	72
ACTUAL VISITATION	48	50
YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS (N = 41)		
LEGAL AGREEMENT	100	76
ACTUAL VISITATION	72	48

PERCENT OF ADOLESCENTS WITH
NO CONTACT WITH NAT. FATHER

	BEFORE REM.	SINCE REM
OLDER/ONLY ADOL. (N = 87)	20	29
YOUNG. ADOL. (N = 41)	15	24

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE
ACTUAL VISITATION WITH NAT. FATHERS
FOR YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS

SOURCE	F	SIGNIF. OF F
MAIN EFFECTS		
SEX OF ADOLESCENT	5.960	.02*
TYPE OF CUSTODY	.049	.82
AGE OF ADOLESCENT (COVAR)	4.076	.05*
TWO-WAY INTERACTIONS		
SEX X CUSTODY	.001	.97

MEDIAN NUMBER OF DAYS PER YEAR OF VISITATION BETWEEN STEPFATHERS AND THEIR NATURAL CHILDREN UNDER 18 YRS

	BEFORE REM	SINCE REM
OLDEST CHILD (N = 15)		
LEGAL AGREEMENT	76	62
ACTUAL VISITATION	62	56
SECOND CHILD (N = 18)		
LEGAL AGREEMENT	62	62
ACTUAL VISITATION	56	52
THIRD CHILD (N = 8)		
LEGAL AGREEMENT	55	12
ACTUAL VISITATION	24	12

PERCENT OF STEPFAMILY MEMBERS WHO REPORT PRIMARY RELATIONSHIPS LIVING ELSEWHERE AS PART OF IMMEDIATE FAMILY

31% older adol. included nat father

24% younger adol. included nat father

51% stepfathers included natural non-custodial children

PERCENT OF ADULTS REPORTING CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH PERSONS OUTSIDE THE HOUSEHOLD

PERSON	BETTER	NO CHANGE	WORSE
EX-SPOUSE			
HUSB	23	51	26
WIVES	35	48	17
PARENTS			
HUSB	44	48	8
WIVES	35	61	5

PERCENT OF ADULTS REPORTING QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH EX-SPOUSES AT TIME OF STUDY

	FRIENDLY	BUS-LIKE	HOST	NO CONT
HUSB (N=59)	32	22	8	37
WIVES (N=87)	41	39	13	7

PERCENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS REPORTING ON QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STEPFATHER AND NATURAL FATHER

	GENERALLY POSITIVE	GENERALLY NEGATIVE	DOES NOT APPLY
HUSB	53	24	24
WIVES	51	27	22
OLDER ADOL.	52	18	31

PERCENT OF ADOLESCENTS REPORTING CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENDED FAMILY

FREQ OF VISITING NAT FATHER'S PARENTS

	MORE	NO CHANGE	LESS
OLDER ADOL	7	64	19
YOUNG ADOL	15	60	25

CONSIDERATION OF STEPFATHER'S PARENTS AS GRANDPARENTS

	YES	NO
OLDER ADOL	61	39
YOUNG ADOL	68	32

Note. Older adolescents N=87; younger adolescents N=41.

grandpar